

**NJAC LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**  
*County Planners*  
 September 17, 2010

**1. PROPERTY TAX REFORM TOOL KIT TABLE**

The table below provides an overview of Governor Chris Christie’s property tax reform tool kit, which includes the tool kit number, the tool kit item, corresponding legislation, and the item’s overall status to date. Please note that tool kit reform measures (22–31) deal with education and higher education reform, and are not included in this table.

| <b>#</b> | <b>TOOL KIT ITEM</b>  | <b>LEGISLATION</b>   | <b>STATUS</b>  |
|----------|---|--|--|
| 1        | Constitutional amendment to impose a property tax cap levy of 2.5%.                       | S-29 ( <i>Sweeney</i> )<br>Establishes a property tax cap levy of 2.0%.  | Signed into law on July 13 <sup>th</sup> as P.L. 2010 c.44.  |
| 2        | Constitutional amendment to impose a 2.5% cap on State spending.                          | S-2202/A-3153 ( <i>Oroho</i> )<br>Establishes a 2.0% cap on annual appropriations increases for certain State government spending. | S-2202 is in Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee. A-3153 is proposed for introduction.                  |
| 3        | Reform in the selection of arbitrators for union contracts.                               | S-287 ( <i>Stack/Sacco</i> )<br>Establishes random selection of PERC arbitrators.<br>See S-2171/A-3075 below as well.              | In Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism, & Historic Preservation Committee.                              |
| 4        | Mandate arbitrators to consider impact of union contracts on property taxes.              | S-2171/A-3075 ( <i>Doherty/Chiusano</i> )<br>Implements Governor’s toolkit for collective bargaining reform.                       | S-2171 is in Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee. A-3075 is in the Assembly State Government Committee. |
| 5        | Bar arbitrators from making contract awards that exceed property tax cap levy.            | See S-2171.  | See S-2171.  |
| 6        | Eliminate eligibility for State retirement systems for non-government groups.             | S-2100/A-2499 ( <i>Sweeney/Moriarty</i> )<br>Prohibits NJAC, NJSLM, & NJSBA from enrolling in PERS or SHBP.                        | S-2100 is in Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee. A-2499 is on Second Reading in General Assembly.      |
| 7        | Cap sick leave and carry forward of vacation time for current employees.                  | S-2220 ( <i>Sarlo</i> )<br>Limits unused sick leave pay and carry forward of vacation time for current employees.                  | The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee will consider S-2220 on September 13, 2010.                     |
| 8        | Civil service reforms to eliminate buyouts, bumping, and other civil service protections. | A-2953 ( <i>Peterson</i> )<br>Permits layoffs as substitute for employment reconciliation plans for shared services agreements.    | In Assembly Housing and Local Government Committee.  |
| 9        | Additional civil service reforms to eliminate buyouts, bumping, and other civil           | S-1012/A-177 ( <i>Oroho</i> )( <i>Chiusano</i> )<br>Repeals law concerning transfer  | State Government, Wagering, Tourism & Historic Preservation Committee. A-                                      |

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|    | service protections.   | of employees form terminated local health agency.  | 177 is Assembly Housing and Local Government Committee.  |
| 10 | Allows furloughs by local governments to save costs.                                     | S-2206 ( <i>Sweeney</i> )<br>Provides that State or local appointing authority in civil service may institute temporary layoffs.                                   | In Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee.   |
| 11 | Allows local governments to opt out of civil service.                                    | A-2580 ( <i>Burzychelli</i> )<br>Permits counties and municipalities to withdraw from civil service by ordinance.  | In Assembly State Government Committee.  |
| 12 | Public employee discipline reform.   | S-2135/A-2955<br>( <i>Cardinale</i> )( <i>Bucco</i> )<br>Limits right of appeal of disciplinary action taken by employer against certain public employees.         | S-2135 is in Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism, & Historic Preservation Committee.<br>A-2955 is Assembly Housing and Local Government Committee.    |
| 13 | Police employee discipline reform.   | See S-2135/A-2955  | See S-2135/A-2955  |
| 14 | Firefighter employee discipline reform.  | See S-2135/A-2955  | See S-2135/A-2955  |
| 15 | Additional Employee discipline reform.   | See S-2135/A-2955  | See S-2135/A-2955  |
| 16 | Revise layoff rules to allow less senior, but more essential employees to avoid bumping. | S-2011/A-2950<br>( <i>Oroho</i> )( <i>Chiusano</i> )<br>Eliminates seniority in civil service for reductions in workforce under certain circumstances.             | S-2011 is in Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism, & Historic Preservation Committee.<br>A-2950 is in Assembly Housing and Local Government Committee. |
| 17 | Provide Civil Service Commissioner with more control over day-to-day operations.         | S-2154/A-2957<br>( <i>Oroho</i> )( <i>Chiusano</i> )<br>Replaces references to Civil Service Commissioner with Chairperson to clarify duties and responsibilities. | S-2154 is in Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee. A-2957 is in Assembly State Government Committee.   |
| 18 | Increase testing and appeal fees for civil service promotional exams.                    | S-2140/A-3010<br>( <i>Singer</i> )( <i>Malone</i> )<br>Increases application fees for civil service exams and appeals.   | Signed into law on June 30 <sup>th</sup> as P.L. 2010, c.26.   |
| 19 | Allows Civil Service Commissioner to make seasonal appointments.                         | S-2039/A-2954<br>( <i>Bateman</i> )( <i>Bucco</i> )<br>Makes various changes to civil service laws concerning seasonal appointments.                               | S-2039 is Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism, & Historic Preservation Committee. A-2954 is in Assembly State Government Committee.                   |
| 20 | Allow municipalities to offset property tax refunds against State income tax refunds.    | S-2012 ( <i>Doherty</i> )<br>Allows gross income tax refunds to be credited against taxpayers'   | On Second Reading in Senate.   |

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|    |   | delinquent property taxes.  |  |
| 21 | Expand parties that may bring challenges to Council on Local Mandates.  | S-2208 ( <i>Sarlo</i> )<br>Provides organizations, such as NJAC, with standing to file complaints with Council on Local Mandates.   | On Second Reading in Senate.   |
| 32 | Require only single ballot to each household instead of multiple ballots to all voters residing in household. | S-1781/A1646<br>( <i>Beach</i> )( <i>Greenwald</i> )<br>Provides that one sample ballot shall be delivered to each residence address where at least one resident thereof is registered to vote. | S-1781 is on Second Reading in Senate. A-1646 is in Assembly State Government Committee. |
| 33 | Move school and fire elections to November.   | S-1312 ( <i>Turner</i> )<br>Provides for the election of school members in November and eliminates vote on school budgets.  | In Senate Education Committee.   |

## 2. SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE SUMMER SESSIONS

Throughout the course of the summer, the Senate Budget and Appropriation's Committee has been meeting to discuss various pieces of legislation intended to save local taxpayer dollars and are part of Governor Chris Christie's reform package. NJAC has worked on the following matters:

**SENATE, NO 2072** (*StackD-33*), which permits the publication of legal notices by governments and individuals on an official government website instead of a newspaper. NJAC supports this legislation as it provides county governments with the option of either publishing legal notices in a newspaper as required under current law or posting such notices on its official county website if such a strategy proves cost effective. Pursuant to a broad-based survey completed by our county administrators, finance officers, and purchasing officials, county governments spent approximately \$1.2 million on publishing mandated legal notices in various newspaper publications throughout the State in 2009. In general, this figure includes legal notices required by law of our clerks of the board, planning departments, purchasing officials, park commissions, and county authorities. Such notices typically include contract awards, contract addendums, various legal notices, meeting notices, RFP and RFQ notices, and election notices. *Please note that the above figure does not include sheriff sales, where advertising costs are typically paid by plaintiffs and not taxpayer dollars.* In light of the fact that all twenty-one counties maintain comprehensive websites, county governments could realize a potential cost savings of up to 90% if this bill becomes law. S-2072 is on Second Reading in the Senate; and its counter part in the General Assembly A-2082 (*Cryan D-20*) is in the Assembly Housing and Local Government Committee awaiting consideration.

**SENATE, NO. 2208** (*Sarlo D-36*), which allows certain organizations, such as NJAC, to file complaints with the Council on Local Mandates. NJAC supports this legislation as it has the potential to drastically reduce litigation expenses incurred by counties that intend to file complaints with the Council. Although NJAC supports this legislation as introduced, we are

advocating for an additional amendment that would require at least one county official serve as a member of the Council. Under current law, the Governor appoints four members, the Legislature appoints four members, and the Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court appoints one. Our county administrators, finance officers, and purchasing officials, would prove to be a valuable resource for the Council, and their experiences with the day-to-day operations of local governments should be considered in all Council decisions. S-2208 is on Second Reading in the Senate; and Assemblyman Frederick Scalera (*D-36*) plans to introduce similar legislation in fall and after holding a round table discussion and public hearing.

**SENATE, NO. 2220** (*Sarlo D-3*), which limits unused sick leave pay and vacation leave carry-forward for school and local employees. NJAC has not taken a position on this bill at this time, but its board of directors will consider the matter at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

In summary, this bill amends current law to make applicable for all current and future officers and employees of boards of education and local governments the limit of \$15,000 for the payment of supplemental compensation at retirement for accumulated unused sick leave, and the limit on the carrying forward of vacation leave for one year only. Current officers and employees will be permitted to retain any supplemental compensation for unused sick leave, or to carry forward any vacation leave, already accrued as of the bill's effective date. In addition, the bill amends a section of law that permits local units to adopt an ordinance authorizing special emergency appropriations for contractually required severance liabilities resulting from the layoff or retirement of employees by removing the condition that this occur only when the total liability is in excess of 10 per cent of the amount to be raised by taxes for municipal purposes in the fiscal year in which the layoffs or retirements take place. The bill goes on to provide that such liabilities are to be paid without interest and, at the sole discretion of the local unit, may be paid in equal annual installments over a period not to exceed 10 years. Finally, the bill imposes limits on the use of sick leave by a State, local, or board of education employee in the twelve months before retirement. This provision applies to employees who commence employment with an individual employer on or after the bill's effective date. Specifically, the bill prohibits the use of six or more consecutive days of accumulated sick leave, without medical necessity verified in writing by a physician, by an officer or employee in the twelve months prior to retirement in anticipation of that retirement. The bill would not be deemed to impair the obligation of a collective negotiations agreement or individual contract of employment with relevant provisions in effect on the bill's effective date.

As noted in the chart above, the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee will consider this legislation at its September 13<sup>th</sup> meeting, but there is no version of the bill in the General Assembly at this time.

**SENATE, NO. 2024** (*Kyrillos R-17*), which permits lay off plans as a substitute for employment reconciliation plans for joint meetings or shared service agreements under certain circumstances. NJAC's Work Group on Civil Service Reform discussed this matter with Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein at a round table discussion on August 3<sup>rd</sup>; and then on August 16<sup>th</sup> Monmouth County Administrator Teri O'Connor and Morris County Director of Human Resources Grace Kelly testified before the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee that NJAC should support this legislation to eliminate financial disincentives for streamlining county governments. S-2024

remains in the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee, and there is no version of this legislation in the General Assembly at this time.

**SENATE, NO. 2135** (*Cardinale R-39*), which limits the right of appeal of disciplinary action taken by employer against certain public employees. S-2135 (*Cardinal R-39*). Although this legislation only applies to State employees, police officers, and firefighters in municipalities, Mrs. O'Connor and Mrs. Kelly testified before the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee on August 16<sup>th</sup> that NJAC should support similar legislation applicable to public employees in county governments. S-2135 remains in the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee; and its counterpart in the General Assembly A-2955 (*Bucco R-35*) is in the Assembly Housing and Local Government Committee awaiting consideration.

**SENATE, NO. 2209** (*Sweeney D-3*), which eliminates the five percent down payment requirement for bond ordinances approved by counties and municipalities. NJAC supports this legislation as it frees up important resources that counties may utilize to manage their affairs in a more flexible and efficient manner. Moreover, this legislation streamlines the current local bond issuance process as the Local Finance Board in the Department of Community Affairs often waives the five percent down payment requirement. S-2209 is on Second Reading in the Senate, and there is no version of this legislation in the General Assembly at this time.

### 3. GENERAL ASSEMBLY PROPERTY TAX RELIEF PLAN

Throughout the course of the summer, the General Assembly has been holding informal round table discussions on various pieces of legislation intended to save local taxpayer dollars and are part of Governor Chris Christie's reform package. To date, NJAC has met with: Assemblywoman Linda Stender to discuss civil service reform; Assemblyman Paul Moriarty to discuss furlough plans; and, Assemblyman Fred Scalera to discuss reforms to the Council on Local Mandates. NJAC also participated on a conference call with Assemblyman John McKeon to discuss the impact of unfunded mandates on county governments.

**REFORMS TO COUNCIL ON LOCAL MANDATES** - On August 10<sup>th</sup>, Assemblyman Frederick Scalera held an informal meeting with NJAC and several other groups to discuss S-2208 (*Sarlo D-36*), which allows certain organizations to file complaints with the Council on Local Mandates. As noted above, NJAC supports such legislation and has been advocating for an amendment that would require at least one county official serve as a member of the Council. The Assemblyman plans to hold an additional round table discussion in September, of which NJAC will participate.

**UNFUNDED STATE MANDATES** - On August 20<sup>th</sup>, Assemblyman John McKeon hosted a conference call with several NJAC officials to discuss unfunded mandates imposed on county governments. In summary, we raised the following issues: the costs associated with the operation and maintenance of the county prosecutorial offices and facilities; Superior Court directives on security and capital improvements; county boards of taxation and election; State psychiatric institution patients; community college charge backs; human services subsidies; continuing education and training requirements; County Environmental Health Act (CEHA), prevailing wage requirements; and health department consolidation. Given that the State faces a

projected structural deficit of \$10.5 billion in fiscal year 2012 and that it's unrealistic to expect any additional funding from Trenton over the next several years, the Assemblyman appreciated our argument that the State should empower county governments to become more actively engaged in the decision making process over ever increasing mandates.

*Special thanks to those who participated on the call: NJAC President and Somerset County Freeholder Peter Palmer , Cumberland County Freeholder Louis Magazzu, Mercer County Freeholder Ann Cannon, Atlantic County Administrator Jerry Delrosso, Atlantic County Finance Officer Jane Lugo, Atlantic County Counsel Jim Ferguson, Sussex County Administrator John Eskilson, Middlesex County Administrator John Pulomena, Essex County Director of Purchasing James Jorgenson, & Burlington County Health Officer Robert Gogats*

**FURLOUGH PLANS** - On August 5<sup>th</sup>, Assemblyman Paul Moriarty held an informal meeting to discuss S-2206 (*Sweeney D-3*), which authorizes State and local appointing authorities in civil service to institute temporary layoffs. Union representatives from the CWA, AFL-CIO, and others strongly oppose the bill in any form and prefer to rely on the collective bargaining process for all matters. In general, management offers mild support for the legislation and agrees that involuntary furloughs should be used as a last resort. At the end of the day, the Assemblyman does not support the bill as introduced; and concurs with management that local governments must face some type of emergent need before moving forward with involuntary furloughs in the manner as prescribe by the legislation. In fact, if this bill moves forward in the General Assembly, it will contain some type of trigger mechanism. Morris County Director of Human Resources Grace Kelly participated in this discussion on behalf of NJAC, and did an outstanding job at representing county governments.

#### 4. CIVIL SERVICE REFORM - WORK GROUP DISCUSSION

As the result of a very productive meeting with Assemblywoman Linda Stender, NJAC formed a work group of seasoned human resources personnel to develop a set of realistic and meaningful civil service reform measures. In summary, these measures include: extending temporary seasonal employee appointments to ten months; expanding the working test period to six months; extending the time frame for disciplinary review appeals to 15 days; authorizing reconciliation plans; modifying special reemployment lists; modifying individual transfers; eliminating bumping rights, and altering the open competitive process.

**SEASONAL EMPLOYEES** - Current civil service laws prevent local governments from hiring temporary seasonal employees for more than three months. As a result of this antiquated measure, county governments must hire and train two separate workforces to maintain seasonal services at county golf courses, park systems, and zoos that remain open to the public for up to ten months every calendar year. With this in mind, NJAC recommends authorizing local governments to hire temporary seasonal employees for up to 10 months to eliminate an unnecessary level of bureaucracy and to empower county governments to operate more efficiently and effectively.

Please note that outlined below is an unofficial list of "Temporary Seasonal Employee Titles" currently used by several county governments, but not maintained by the Civil Service Commission (Commission):

Animal Attendant, Archery Instructor, Bathroom Attendant, Bridge Operator, Cashier, Clerk, Clerical, County Park Ranger, Election Worker, Farm Maintenance, Gardener, Golf Ranger, Golf Starter, Graduate Nurse, Graphic Artist, Greens Keeper, Groundskeeper, Historian, Historic Site Interpreter, Horseback Riding Instructor, Human Service Summer Youth Employee, Laborer, Life Guard, Life Guard Supervisor, Medical Examiner Investigator, Morgue Attendant, Morgue Custodian, Mosquito Extermination Inspector, Naturalist Educator, Park Attendant, Park Laborer, Park Maintenance Worker, Park Naturalist, Practical Nurse, Range Instructor, Recreation Leader, Recreation Program Supervisor, Recreation Supervisor, Security Guard, Telecommunications Trainee, Truck Driver, Zoo Aide.

Given that as noted above the Commission does not maintain such a list and that several legislators have expressed concerns about including law enforcement personnel in certain civil service reform measures, NJAC recommends the following language to amend the relevant sections of N.J.S. 11A:4-13 c.:

“Other than temporary law enforcement appointments, seasonal positions may be established for a maximum of ten months in a 12-month period if the appointing authority has submitted the applicable list of seasonal titles to the chairperson and the chairperson has approved them.”

**WORKING TEST PERIOD** - The Commission defines the Working Test Period (WTP) as the period of time following a regular appointment from a certified list or appointment to a non-competitive title. The Commission considers the WTP as a continuation of the examination process and as an opportunity for local governments to properly evaluate employees. The current WTP for local governments is three months with no extensions unless the position is an entry level law enforcement or firefighter title. County officials have found that this relatively short time frame inhibits human resources personnel from properly evaluating employees and making accurate recommendations accordingly. As such, NJAC recommends a WTP of six months to provide local governments with a greater opportunity to fully assess the potential of future employees.

**DISCIPLINARY REVIEW APPEALS** - Current civil service rules authorize employees to appeal all disciplinary actions that result in an employee being suspended for five working days or more without regard for the severity of the disciplinary action. After a departmental hearing on the merits, an employee may file such an appeal with the Merit System Board within the Commission, which then typically transfers the matter to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing by an Administrative Law Judge. This process takes a considerable amount of time and uses valuable county taxpayer dollars in terms of county counsel fees and staff resources. Although departmental hearings are an essential component of the collective bargaining process and serve to protect employees, NJAC recommends that the Commission limit its jurisdiction to hear appeals only when the disciplinary action results in an employee being suspended for 15 working days or more.

**RECONCILIATION PLANS** - The Uniform Shared Services and Consolidation Act sets forth the rules necessary to effectuate agreements between local units for any service or circumstance intended to reduce property taxes through the reduction of local expenses. This law currently includes a requirement to compensate employees who are separated from employment due to a consolidation or shared services agreement with terminal leave payments. NJAC recommends eliminating these statutorily imposed severance payments as a substantial financial disincentive for local governments working to consolidate costs and save valuable taxpayer dollars.

**SPECIAL REEMPLOYMENT LISTS** - Current civil service rules require the establishment of a “Special Reemployment List” when permanent employees are laid off, demoted, or displaced from employment. With very few exceptions, special reemployment lists take priority over all other reemployment lists, open competitive lists, and lateral title changes. Further, employees placed on special reemployment lists remain on said list for an unlimited duration. As currently drafted, the Administrative Code grants extraordinary reemployment rights to displaced workers. While it is understandable that civil service seeks to protect employees from layoff, the rules place an undue hardship on management. Displaced employees often exercise lateral “bumping rights” and acquire positions for which they lack relevant experience at the expense of other covered employees. Most notably, however, special reemployment lists do not expire. As such, employees routinely pass up jobs that they are not interested in to preserve their place on a special reemployment list. This creates unnecessary levels of bureaucracy at both the State and local levels. If the purpose of a special reemployment list is to preserve an employee’s rights to a title that is closed, that protection should cease once an employee declines such a position. As such, NJAC recommends modifying the Administrative Code to eliminate the perpetuity of special reemployment lists. Once an employee declines a position for which they have title rights, they should then be removed from a special reemployment list.

**BUMPING RIGHTS** - Current civil service laws make it difficult for local governments to layoff staff for reasons of economy and efficiency. Once a layoff plan has been approved and proper notice has been given, subject employees have the right to “Bump” other employees from their titles and potentially their jobs. Although an appointing authority may have planned for a certain financial and service outcome from said layoff, that plan is typically inaccurate because of bumping entitlements. To make matters worse, the Commission will not share bumping rights with the appointing authority; and such rights are granted based on title and qualifications and not on job performance. With this in mind, NJAC recommends either eliminating bumping rights or requiring the Commission to fully disclose such rights upon request, so that local governments may properly execute a layoff as original planned.

**INDIVIDUAL TRANSFERS** - Current civil service laws prohibit local governments from transferring individual permanent classified employees from one department to another without an employee’s express written consent. As local governments continue to struggle to make ends meet while providing essential services, this outdated procedural hurdle makes it difficult for local governments to manage affairs in a flexible manner and provide efficient resources where necessary. With this in mind, NJAC recommends authorizing local governments to transfer employees from one department to another when a department experiences down time and important resources are needed elsewhere. Please note that current law authorizes local governments to transfer entire units without the written consent of employees.



**OPEN COMPETITIVE PROCESS** - As a modified position to legislation that would allow local governments to “opt out” of civil service, NJAC recommends revising the broken “Open Competitive Process.” Title certifications cannot be generated to find candidates, since it takes far too long to fill positions. In most cases, a local government fills a position with a provisional employee hired through regular human resources practice and screening. Only after this hire has been made and months have passed does the Commission post a vacancy announcement. The announcement is misleading to job seekers, who believe that a vacancy exists when in fact it does not. After the announcement closes and several months have passed, a certification is generated; and in most cases, the names provided to the local appointing authority as eligible are not screened by the Commission beyond a paper application. The Commission does not interview the job seeker, verify information, check references, or test candidates. However, the local authority is informed that they must use this list for hiring purposes, and that prior interviews, reference checks, or skills examination carry no weight.

Revisions to the open competitive process should authorize local governments, which subscribe to the Commission’s job specifications, to recruit and screen candidates by using best practices methodology and residency preference guidelines to select the most qualified candidate. The Commission may still regulate the procedures to assure the proper posting of vacancies and review appropriate veterans’ preferences. Upon employment, local governments should then submit to the Commission for approval, the new hire’s application, resume, other relevant credentials, and of course an application fee. The Commission may also issue a certificate to the appointing authority that the employee is the most qualified and best candidate for the position.

*Special thanks to work group members: Monmouth County Administrator Teri O’Connor, Essex County Administrator Joyce Harley, Salem County Administrator Earl Gage, Middlesex County Clerk Elaine Flynn, Morris County Director of Human Resources Grace Kelly, Middlesex County Director of Human Resources Dennis Cerami, and Passaic County Deputy County Administrator Tim Cunningham.*

#### 5. COUNTY PROSECUTORS’ OFFICE TASK FORCE

On behalf of Governor Chris Christie’s task force to study the costs associated with the county prosecutors’ offices and task force member Morris County Administrator John Bonanni, NJAC developed and then distributed four tables designed to capture the significant costs associated with operating and maintaining twenty-one county prosecutors’ offices. These tables include operating expenses, capital expenses, litigation costs, and miscellaneous data; and, should be completed and returned to NJAC before the Task Force reconvenes in September. The Task Force plans to present its findings to the Governor by the end of the year.

#### 6. COUNTY VETO POWERS

On August 18<sup>th</sup>, Governor Chris Christie signed into law last night S-763/A-2078 (*Sweeney D-3/Cryan D-20*), which authorizes the directors of boards of chosen freeholders to exercise veto powers over the proposed actions of county authorities. NJAC supported this important initiative throughout the legislative process as it will provide county governments with an additional

resource to manage taxpayer dollars in a more effective and efficient manner. In summary, the new law provides non-optional charter counties with the same veto powers granted to charter counties and takes effect immediately.

#### 7. COPY FEE LEGISLATION

A-559 (*Cryan D-20*), which decreases certain public document copy fees to \$0.05 per letter size page and \$0.07 per legal size page remains on the Governor's Desk awaiting action. Although NJAC was instrumental in securing amendments that will provide uniformity under the law, NJAC remains concerned with the "access to electronics records" language contained in the latest version. In summary, these concerns are based on the fact that the language could be interpreted to allow certain vendors direct access to county computer systems or indexes, which contain proprietary information such as dates of birth and social security numbers of homeowners that record deeds and mortgages. Without some important procedural safeguards in place, this language would seem to allow for the manipulation of large volumes of data and compromise the privacy and security of residents. With this in mind, NJAC has requested a conditional veto of the measure, which should provide some additional clarity in the law, while protecting both homeowners and those seeking electronic records.

#### 8. GOVERNOR'S ETHICS REFORM PACKAGE

On September 8<sup>th</sup>, Governor Chris Christie unveiled a series of ethics reform measures as the first specific policy proposals of his Reform Agenda. Most notably, the proposal includes Omnibus ethics legislation to end dual government employment and dual office holding, requires the forfeiture of pensions by convicted public officials, prohibits the use of campaign funds for criminal defense costs, and redefines conflict of interest for legislators by making recusal mandatory for direct financial conflict. The proposal also imposes a uniform standard for awarding contracts at all levels and branches of government, and expands the reach of the pay-to-play law to make public labor unions subject to the same contribution and disclosure obligations as other entities doing business with the State.